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THE SPREAD OF THE SCHOOL MANSE IDEA

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The essentials for an efficient school are: (1) competent teachers, (2) expert supervision, (3) adequate housing and (4) proper equipment. In these four respects American rural schools have been outclassed by town and city systems. Of late progress has been made toward improved education in the country districts. Consolidation solves admirably the problem of housing and equipment. The county-unit, the appointee superintendency and the supervisory corps offer hopeful prospects of a stimulating administration. Better salaries and higher requirements for certification are slowly drawing a more competent class of teachers into rural service. One of the chief obstacles, however, to this movement is the absence, in country communities, of satisfactory living conditions for teachers. The problem of rural education will never be solved until this issue has been clearly recognized and squarely met.

The older countries of Europe have long recognized that the proper housing of teachers is as much a duty of school authorities as the provision of class rooms, laboratories and gymnasia. In Denmark every rural school has its teachers' house with kitchen garden and flower garden. The schoolmaster and his assistants live on the school grounds. The institution is not a place deserted for all but a few hours in the day; it is rather a permanent residence of community leaders. Little wonder that the Denmark¹ schoolmaster holds his place year after year. It is not unusual for a principal to devote his whole life to one or two communities. Throughout Germany practically the same system prevails with the same results in educational efficiency and community leadership. In France every rural teacher is provided at public expense with living quarters. The same system is well established and is spreading in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

In various parts of the United States significant experiments in providing houses for teachers have been made. In Hawaii one-

¹See *Rural Denmark and Its Schools*, Harold W. Foght, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1915.

third of the schools have cottages built at public expense. In the state of Washington notable progress has been made in furnishing living quarters for teachers. North Dakota has twenty-two schools equipped in this way. Mississippi, North Carolina, Illinois, Tennessee and Oklahoma have made promising experiments. In St. Louis County, Minnesota, twenty-five rural school teachers live, in groups of two and three, in cottages built and completely furnished at public expense.

A teachers' house or school manse is peculiarly necessary to the success of the consolidated rural school which, it is now agreed, is to be the typical country school of the future. There should be built, in connection with the consolidated school on the same grounds with the school building and heated by the same plant, a permanent house for the use of the teaching staff. This building should contain a wholly separate apartment for the principal and his family, living room and bed-rooms for the women teachers, laundry, kitchens, etc. It should be equipped with a view to providing in the community a model of tasteful and economical domestic furnishing and decoration. The rentals and other charges should be so regulated as to provide for the maintenance, insurance, repairs and renewals of equipment, but not for a sinking-fund. The house should be regarded as a part of the school plant and included in the regular bond issue for construction. A privately owned manse in Illinois is netting 8 per cent on an investment of \$10,000.

The manse has a bearing in several ways upon the educational work of the school. Flowers and vegetable gardens are natural features of school premises which are also residence quarters. The domestic science work of the school can be connected in valuable ways with the practical problems of manse management. The cost accounting offers a capital example of bookkeeping. The use of the school as a community center is widened and its value enhanced. The school as an institution takes on a more vital character in the eyes of the countryside.

Most important of all is the effect upon the teacher. Comfortably heated, well-lighted quarters, comradeship with colleagues—and at the same time personal privacy—a satisfying, coöperatively managed table, independence of the petty family rivalries of a small community, a recognized institutional status, combine to attract to the consolidated rural school manse teachers of a type

which will put the country school abreast of the modern educational movement. It is futile to preach the gospel of sacrifice for the cause of rural education. There is no reason why rural teachers should be called upon to sacrifice themselves. They ought not to do it, and they will not do it. The school manse is not a fad, nor a luxury; it is a fundamental necessity.